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Father, son help Iraq build for the future

By Norris Jones
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Howard Stallcup and his son, Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stallcup. [USACE Photo]

BAGHDAD, Iraq – They see each other every two or three months stateside.

But today, this father and son are both deployed to the Victory Base Complex in Baghdad and join each other for breakfast every morning.

Howard Stallcup is the Baghdad area coordinator for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) providing guidance to Iraqi police located at 114 stations in Iraq's capital. Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stallcup is assigned to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) helping rebuild the country's essential services.

"During breakfast, most of the conver-

sation is centered on our families, what's going on back home," Howard explained. "And I look forward to hearing about the various construction projects Rob is helping oversee. He's got a pretty big job and I enjoy catching up on what he's doing."

Howard retired as a First Sergeant after 23 years in the U.S. Army. He then served as a police officer in Highland Village, Texas (located north of Dallas). When he retired from that job in 2000, he started volunteering for overseas duty - first to Bosnia, then to Kosovo. He's been in Iraq for 27 months. His current contract ends in September and it may be time to head

home to his wife Cynthia, and to fish and watch the grass grow for awhile, he says. He turned 60 in February.

Rob has nearly 20 years as a U.S. Army Military Policeman and deployed from Ft. Sill, Okla. He says he's been trying to deploy to Iraq or Afghanistan for quite some time. "Fortunately I have a great wife back home who grew up as a military brat and understands the sacrifices and challenges that go along with this career. We've been married 16 years, have four children, and she's been awesome. I explained to her it's like being a football player who practices their whole life and when it's game time you want to participate. Both my dad and I married strong women and we're very fortunate for the love and support they provide."

Howard points out that considering their careers, "my son and I have spent a lot of time apart. It's great we're both assigned to the same base. We're both busy, but we're taking advantage of our time together."

Rob is the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of USACE's Baghdad Area Office, which manages 167 projects valued at more than \$500 million. "We're building schools, repairing sewer lift stations, installing new water and sewer lines, paving roads, constructing courthouses, renovating hospitals, and putting in new electric distribution networks. I just visited one of the new 28 primary healthcare centers we're building in Baghdad. That one facility will serve a neighborhood of 38,000 and is capable of providing medical care to 150 patients daily. We've turned over

most of those facilities to the Ministry of Health and will complete the last one by September," he continued.

"We're involved in helping local residents, trying to give them a foothold, a foundation to stand on as they strive to provide a brighter future for their children and grandchildren. It's a great mission and although I'm just completing my first month of a six-month deployment, I've already submitted paperwork to extend for a full year. I can think of no better unit to be assigned."

Rob says one of the factors that allows him to concentrate on his work and not worry about his family is how their community has stepped in from time to time to help out. Rob and his wife April reside in Chattanooga, Okla., a town of 500 people. "We have lots of animals at our home. One day our horse got loose and April couldn't find him. She called our pastor who recruited some volunteers and the horse was soon located and returned. That's the kind of neighbors we have. I don't plan to leave the military anytime soon, but when I retire, Chattanooga will be our permanent home."

Howard admits he wasn't very excited when he learned his son would be working in Iraq. "Probably like any parent, I was concerned. But I've been able to spend more time with him here in Baghdad than I have in years and that's a blessing. I'm very proud of Rob and his military career. He's doing a tremendous job."

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